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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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Housekeepers' Chats — Mon., Nov. 7, 1927.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "We Visit the Fish Market."

ANNOUNCEMENT: Information about fish and shell-fish, and their value in the diet, approved by the U. S. Bureau of Home Economics. Dinner menu and recipe from the Bureau.

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One day in September, the Menu Specialist and I visited a big market-place, so that we might get some first-hand information about fish. It was quite a trip for me. You see, I grew up in a state far inland. Practically the only fish we had, was canned salmon. Of course it is much easier for inland people to get fish now, than it was some years ago. Salt fish, smoked fish, canned fish, and even frozen fish, are available almost everywhere.

Well, as I was saying, we visited a big market-place. We filled our market-baskets with fresh vegetables, and fresh fruits, and all the flowers we could carry. I like a market-place. This one reminded me of a poem I read recently. It begins this way:

"I have seen beautiful things, in the marketplace:
Gold pyramids, curling leaves of lace,
(Parsley, they called it -- sold it by the pound,
To eager men and women, crowding round.)"

Isn't that a pretty way to describe parsley? The poem ends like this:

"Gay things I've seen, upon a market day --
The gayest, piled-up lacquers, on a tray,
Men bought them -- peppers, yellow, green, and red --
And took them home. Men's bodies must be fed."

That's all I can remember of the poem. As I was saying, we visited the fish market, so that I might learn something about fish, first-hand. The Menu Specialist felt quite sorry for me, because I was always asking questions, about fish. For instance, when we stopped at the fish market, what do you think they were selling? "Spots," and "Channel Cats" and "Croakers."

"Pardon me," I said to my friend, "would you mind telling me what a 'croaker' is?"

"A croaker," said she, "is a 'hardhead.'"

"Maybe so," I said, "but the definition is not very enlightening."

"Aunt Sammy," said the Menu Specialist, "a croaker is a hardhead, and a hardhead is a fish, and a fish --"

"I know," I said hastily, "a fish is sea food. Sea food should be included in the menu, several times a week. Every member of the family, old enough to eat fish, should eat it. Sea-food is valuable as a tissue builder. It contains calcium, phosphorus, iron, and iodine. Iodine is a mineral needed to keep our bodies normal and healthy. It is a lack of iodine, for instance, in food and drinking water, which leads to one form of the disease, known as goiter."

"Exactly," said the Menu Specialist. "Scientific workers have discovered that there is a goiter belt, throughout the inland states. In this section there is a deficiency of iodine in the soil, and consequently in the drinking water, and in the vegetables. Also, in this belt, only small quantities of sea food are eater

"I know it," said I. "I also know that women in these inland states would like to include more sea food in their meals, if it were possible. What kinds of fish would you advise them to buy?"

"Well," said the Menu Specialist, pausing beside a big barrel of fresh oysters, "the homemaker who wants to give her family appetizing, well-balanced meals, at not too high a cost, always makes the most of foods, which are in season, in her locality. She studies the local market, and find out when the different kinds of fish, and shellfish, are available. Of course there are a few standbys, like salmon, codfish, halibut, haddock, bass, trout, flounder, perch, oysters, clams, and scallops. These are in season somewhere, practically every month. Housewives who are interested in serving a variety of sea food, might shop around, and get acquainted with more kinds of fresh fish, and frozen fish, and other sea foods. The average fish dealer can often suggest good ways of cooking fish. Fish can be baked, broiled, and steamed, as well as fried. They can be made into soups, chowders, and cakes, or balls. People who do not like to clean fish, may be able to buy fillets. A fillet is a thick, flat slice of fish, without the bone. . There's nothing nicer, to my mind," concluded my friend, "than a fillet of haddock!"

The fish dealer took notice of us then. We asked him how one could be sure, that she was buying fresh fish.

"That is easy," said he. "A fresh fish has full, bright eyes; bright red gills; firm flesh; and a fresh odor. Notice particularly whether the flesh, along the backbone, smells fresh. The first signs of spoilage, are noticeable at this point. The main blood vessel, lies along the backbone. "Most women who come in here, want fish to fry," he continued. "I always suggest that they vary their method of cooking, and try broiling, or baking, or boiling. If the fish itself, contains a great deal of fat, frying in more fat is likely to make it too rich. Broiling, under a gas flame, or over hot coals, requires very little, if any, added fat. Broiling also develops a delicious flavor. Stuffing and baking is of course an excellent way to cook fairly large fish. Do you have any more questions?"

"Yes," said I, "perhaps I can learn about croakers from you. Can you tell me what a croaker is, and why it's called a croaker?"

The fish dealer looked puzzled. "A croaker," said he, "is a hardhead. A hardhead is a fish. And fish, as everybody knows--"

"Yes, yes," I interrupted him. "As everybody knows, fish should be included in the diet. Fish, and other sea-food. Oysters, for instance."

"Yes, indeed," said the man. "Oysters are in season from September to May. An ideal oyster is plump, firm-meated, and light-colored, rather than thin, dark, or watery, although there is nothing unhealthful about the dark oysters. Another good shellfish is the scallop. Scallops are not so well known, and widely used, as oysters, but they are a delicious food. So are lobsters," said the man. "Can I sell you a nice fresh lobster?"

We did not buy a lobster, but we bought fillet of haddock. There are a few general points about frying fish, that everybody should know. Fish should be fried over fairly low, even heat; therefore, a heavy skillet is best. Use sweet-flavored fat, and use only enough fat, to keep the fish from sticking to the skillet. Always wipe the fish, before rolling it in flour, or corn meal. When the fat is hot, but not so hot that it smokes, put the pieces of fish in. Do not crowd them. Reduce the temperature at once, cook slowly, and turn the fish when a brown crust has formed. If fish is turned too soon, it is likely to fall to pieces, and soak up the fat.

Since we are talking about fish today, I have a fish dinner for you, with Fried Fillets of Haddock as the main dish. Haddock is a fish that ships well, and it is relatively inexpensive. Besides the Fried Fillets of Haddock, we have on our bill of fare today Scalloped Tomatoes, Brussels Sprouts, and, for dessert, Chocolate Rice Pudding.

I believe the Chocolate Rice Pudding is not in the Cookbook. I'll give you the recipe. For Chocolate Rice Pudding, seven ingredients:

2 cups milk
1-1/2 squares chocolate
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon vanilla
1 tablespoon cornstarch, and
2 cups cooked rice

I'll repeat the seven ingredients, while you check them: (Repeat)

Heat the milk, the chocolate, the salt, the sugar, and the vanilla together, until the chocolate is melted, and well blended with the other ingredients. Moisten the cornstarch, and stir it into the mixture. Add the rice, Pour the mixture into a baking dish. Bake it for 20 minutes. This will make 8 or 10 average servings.

To repeat the menu: Fried Fillets of Haddock, Scalloped Tomatoes, Brussels Sprouts, and Chocolate Rice Pudding.

Now I want to ask a favor of you. I would really like to know why a croaker is called a croaker, and why it is sometimes called a hardhead. I've asked a good many persons this question, but they give me no satisfaction. There must be some wise fisherman in the country, who knows the answer. I have figured out that a "spot" is called a spot because it has a spot behind its shoulders; that a "flounder" is called a flounder because it flounders around on the sandy bottom, but I cannot figure why a "croaker" is called a croaker, or a hardhead. If you know the answer, please tell me.